

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO PRESERVE THE
ACCUSTOMED USAGE OF THE GENERIC NAMES "THERIDION"
WALCKENAER, 1805 AND "ENOPLOGNATHA" PAVESI, 1880 (CLASS
ARACHNIDA, ORDER ARANEAE)

By HERBERT W. LEVI

(University of Wisconsin, Department of Zoology,
Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.)

(Commission Reference : Z.N.(S.) 1008)

The principal purpose of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its Plenary Powers to designate a type species in harmony with accustomed usage for the genus *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805 (*Tabl. Aran.* : 72) (Class Arachnida, Order Araneae). This genus is the type genus of the family THERIDIIDAE, and this makes it important that there should be no change in the concept represented by the generic name *Theridion*, for any such change would lead to serious confusion, more especially in view of the fact that in the present case (as shown below) the application of the normal provisions of the *Règles* would involve a particularly objectionable transfer of the name *Theridion* to an allied genus now known as *Enoplognatha* Pavesi, 1880. As currently interpreted, *Theridion* Walckenaer is a large genus containing about four hundred described species, many of which are common.

2. Walckenaer did not designate or indicate a type species for his genus *Theridion* but from the originally included species Latreille in 1810 (*Consid. gén. Anim. Crust. Arch. Ins.* : 424, 144) selected a species placed in this genus by Walckenaer as *Theridion redimitum* (i.e. *Araneus redimitus* Clerck, 1757, *Aran. svec.* : 59, Pl. 3, Tab. 9) to be the type species of this genus. The above nominal species is accepted by arachnologists as representing the same taxon as that represented by the nominal species *Araneus ovatus* Clerck, 1757 (*ibid.* : 58, Pl. 3, Tab. 8) and it is by this name that the species concerned is currently known.

3. In 1869 (*Nova Acta Soc. Sci. upsal.* (3) 7(1)(No. 5) : 90) Thorell noticed that *Araneus ovatus* Clerck differed in various respects from the other species then (and now) placed in the genus *Theridion*. Overlooking Latreille's prior selection of this species to be the type species of *Theridion* Walckenaer, he erected a new genus *Phyllonethis*, of which he designated the above species as type species. At the same time he selected *Araneus sisyphius* Clerck, 1757 (*Aran. svec.* : 54) as the type species of *Theridion* Walckenaer.

4. In 1880 Pavesi (P.) established another genus to which he gave the name *Enoplognatha*. This name was published twice in the year 1880. The relevant references are :—(a) *Rend. reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere* (2)13 : 192; (b) *Ann. Mus. civico Stor. nat. Genova* 15 (for 1879—1880) : 325. No type species was designated in the first of these papers but in the second Pavesi selected as the type species, the first of the species cited as belonging to this genus in the earlier paper. The species so selected was *Theridion mandibularis* Lucas, 1840 (*Explor. Algér.*, Zool. 1 : 260, pl. 17, fig. 1). In 1950 (*Paper Alabama Mus. nat. Hist.* No. 30 : 23) Archer, after a study of the male genitalia, pointed out that *Araneus ovatus* Clerck belongs to the genus *Enoplognatha*. The observations that *Araneus ovatus* Clerck (*Theridion ovatum* (Clerck)) has a colulus, that the male has modified chelicerae and that the female has a tooth on the posterior margin of the chelicerae, substantiates the evidence brought forward by Thorell and Archer.

5. Accordingly, the generic name *Enoplognatha* Pavesi, 1880, is a subjective junior synonym of *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805. The most serious confusion would however result if under the normal provisions of the *Règles* the name *Theridion* were to be transferred to the genus now known as *Enoplognatha* and some new name had to be found for the genus which for one hundred and fifty years has been known by the name *Theridion*. It is to prevent these serious results that the International Commission is now asked to use its Plenary Powers to designate for *Theridion* Walckenaer a type species which will make it possible to continue to use this generic name in its accustomed sense. Of the species included in the genus *Theridion* by Walckenaer in 1805 the one most suitable for designation as the type species of that genus is that which in 1802 (*Faune paris.* 2 : 207) he had described under the name *Aranea picta*. That name is however, invalid, being a junior primary homonym of *Aranea picta* Razoumowsky, 1789 (*Hist. nat. Jorat* : 242). The oldest available name for this species is *Theridion ornatum* Hahn, 1831 (*Mon. Spinnen* (6) : pl. 3, ♂). The proposal now submitted is therefore that *Theridion ornatum* Hahn should be designated as the type species of the genus *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805. At the same time the Commission is asked to preserve the well-known generic name *Enoplognatha* Pavesi, 1880, by using its Plenary Powers to suppress its senior subjective synonym *Phyllonethis* Thorell, 1869, a name which has hardly been used at all.

6. As the present proposal will involve the placing of the foregoing names on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology*, it is necessary at this point to note that in 1824 Leach (W.E.) (*Ency. brit. Suppl.* 4th–6th Eds. 1(2) : 438) emended the spelling of the name *Theridion* to *Theridium*, without, however, giving his grounds for so doing. In North America the spelling *Theridium* was used by the majority of authors during the XIXth century, although Hentz, who described many species in the fifties, used *Theridion*. Since 1912 the spelling *Theridion* has been consistently used by all authors both in the United States and in South America. In Germany Wiehle in 1937 used the spelling *Theridium* but in his more recent papers he has used *Theridion*. Tullgrun used

the spelling *Theridium* in comments on Swedish Theridiids in the 1940's. This spelling is also used by Bonnet (1955, *Bibl. Aran.*, vol. 2). The great French arachnologist Simon used *Theridion* seventy years ago. Roewer has always used this spelling and has employed it in his recent *Katalog*. The same spelling has been used also by Berland and by Locket & Millidge in 1953 in vol. 2 of their *British Spiders*. To sum up, the spelling *Theridium* is certainly not in general use, although individual authors have used this spelling in recent years. Under a decision taken by the Fourteenth International Congress of Zoology at Copenhagen, 1953 (1953, *Copenhagen Decisions zool. Nomencl.* : 43, Decision 71) the spelling *Theridion* is, it should be noted, a Valid Original Spelling and is therefore not subject to emendation.

7. The genus *Theridion* Walckenaer is, as has already been noted (paragraph 1 above), the type genus of the family THERIDIIDAE. According to Kaston (B.J.) in his "Family Names of the Order Araneae" (1938, *Amer. Midland Nat.* 19(3) : 645) the genus *Theridion* Walckenaer was first made the base of a family-group name by Sundevall (J.C.) in 1833 (*Conspectus Arachnidum* : 15). The form in which Sundevall published this name was THERIDIIDES.

8. The following are the recommendations which for the reasons set forth above are now submitted for the consideration of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, namely that it should :—

- (1) use its Plenary Powers (a) to set aside all selections of type species for the genus *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805, made prior to the Ruling now asked for, (b), having done so, to designate *Theridion ornatum* Hahn, 1831, to be the type species of the foregoing genus, and (c) to suppress the generic name *Phyllonethis* Thorell, 1869, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy ;
- (2) to place the under-mentioned generic names on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* :—
 - (a) *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805 (gender : neuter) (type species, by designation under the Plenary Powers under (1)(b) above : *Theridion ornatum* Hahn, 1831) ;
 - (b) *Enoplognatha* Pavesi (P.), 1880 (gender : feminine) (type species, by designation by Pavesi (1880) : *Theridion mandibularis* Lucas, 1840) ;
- (3) place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—
 - (a) *ornatum* Hahn, 1831, as published in the combination *Theridion ornatum* (specific name of type species of *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805) ;

- (b) *mandibularis* Lucas, 1840, as published in the combination *Theridion mandibularis* (specific name of type species of *Enoplognatha* Pavesi, 1880);
 - (c) *ovatus* Clerck, 1757, as published in the combination *Araneus ovatus*;
 - (d) *sisyphius* Clerck, 1757, as published in the combination *Araneus sisyphius*;
- (4) place the under-mentioned generic names on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology* :—
- (a) *Phyllonethis* Thorell, 1869, as suppressed under the Plenary Powers under (1)(c) above;
 - (b) *Theridium* Leach (W.E.), 1824 (an Invalid Emendation of *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805);
- (5) place the under-mentioned specific name on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* :—*picta* Walckenaer, 1802, as published in the combination *Aranea picta* (a junior primary homonym of *picta* Razoumowsky, 1789, as published in the foregoing combination);
- (6) place the under-mentioned family-group name on the *Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology* :—THERIDIIDAE (correction of THERIDIIDES) Sundevall, 1833 (type genus: *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805);
- (7) place the under-mentioned family-group name on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Family-Group Names in Zoology* :—THERIDIIDES Sundevall, 1833 (type genus: *Theridion* Walckenaer, 1805) (an Invalid Original Spelling for THERIDIIDAE).